HOUSE OF LORDS

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Dear Evelyn and Eric,

Bet and I wish to thank you both most sincerely for the excellent evening you gave us on Wednesday in your beautiful home. We enjoyed the occasion immensely and particularly appreciate the trouble you took to provide such a marvellous meal. You chose a very interesting guest list and we were delighted to have the opportunity of meeting

each of them. From previous experience we know that when we come to the Newmans we shall see things of the greatest fascination. We will remember all we saw, but particularly the beautiful silver dome of Matthew Boulton, the collection of Huntley and Palmer boxes and especially the little bookcase shape and the Dutch atlas with its beautiful colouring in such wonderful condition despite its age.

We were grateful for your company at the lecture and the dinner. You have both helped greatly to make our visit to St. Louis memorable,

Yours ever,

James.

PAPO
Speeches

ADDRESS TO THE EDINBURGH SIR WALTER SCOTT CLUB: 1994

I am profoundly conscious of the great honour the Edinburgh Sir Walter Scott Club has paid me in electing me as its President, in this its Centenary Year. I must confess to finding myself somewhat amazed at being invited to take up this post. Perhaps, having had one past and two future Lord Chancellors in the first thirty years of its existence; then having to wait another thirty-two years before the then Lord Chancellor, Viscount Kilmuir, assumed the Presidency, the Club has decided that the time has now come for another Lord Chancellor to occupy this position. I must also say that I feel rather humbled at being asked to speak tonight and to follow in the footsteps of such notable literary critics and authors as Lord Tweedsmuir, Dr Mavor, David Daiches and David Hewitt. I feel very much the honour that you have done me.

Thank you all very much.

Before I begin my address this evening, which is entitled "Scott and the Old South", I should like to say a few words on the Club's Centenary Year. It is saddening that throughout much of that period the works of Scott have either been divided into those regarded as masterpieces, an those regarded as pot-boilers, or disregarded in their entirety by the general public. It is, perhaps, axiomatic of that general neglect that Edgar Johnson could, nearly twenty-five years ago, publish a substantial

biography and critique of Scott and entitle it "Sir Walter Scott: the Great Unknown". It is, therefore, a tribute to everyone here tonight, and to those members of the Club who are unable to attend, that you have striven so long and hard, throughout the Club's life to promote interest in and study of Scott's works. It is heartening to be able to say that the Club is in good heart and that membership is growing. This evening's proceedings are, therefore, as much a tribute to the Club and its members past and present as to Sir Walter Scott.

I should like now to move on to my address for the evening; "Scott and the Old South". Shelby Foote, in his great three volume narrative of the American Civil War, tells us that Jefferson Davis, the first and only President of the Confederate States of America who was born in Kentucky on 3 June 1880 and died in Louisiana on 6 December 1889, and was thus probably the leading representative of the people of the old South, when his troops had been defeated and his Government had disintegrated and he was fleeing south in April and May 1865 just before his capture at Irwinville while passing through South Carolina, Mallory one of his travelling companions recalled, "he talked very pleasantly of other days and forgot for a time the engrossing anxieties of the situation. He spoke of Scott and Byron, of hunting dogs and horses, in a manner his fellow travellers found 'singularly equable and cheerful' throughout the six day ride to Abbeyville which they reached on 2 May. In his essay "The Southern Slave Holders' View of the Middle Ages"

Eugene D Genovese says: "As the fabled "every schoolboy" knows, the Old South loved Sir Walter Scott."

I am sure that many, if not all of you, will have heard that line, in one form or another, before. I suspect, however, that not many of you will have heard the assertion that I did, not long ago, made by someone from St Louis, Missouri, that the South lost the American Civil War because of the influence of Scott's works.

That assertion raises a number of further questions and it is these and their implications which I should like to explore this evening. The first question is whether, in some way, Scott represents a morally weak stand point or, to put it another way, puts forward an unworkable ideal, the adoption of which had a sapping effect upon a whole community to such an extent that it lost a war. The second question is what did the Old South see in the works of Scott which so influenced it. The third question, which I am sure ultimately provides the solution to the Southerner's assertion, is why the South should wish to blame its defeat on a literary figure whilst, apparently, disregarding the military and other factors which contributed to that defeat.

Before I turn to the first two questions, I think it would be helpful if I set the background to the third with a few facts. The South was less populous than the North and, therefore, had the potential to mobilize fewer men. The South was a primarily

non-industrial economy, and had only one ironworks suited to the manufacture of armaments. The North had relatively unlimited industrial capacity, which could be turned to the production of arms. The North imposed an effective naval blockade on the ports of the South, thereby preventing export of its staple, cotton, and crippling its economy. It was in the interest of the industrialised Old World to support the North, whether actively or passively, and in the eyes of many the South was at a moral disadvantage in being seen to be going to war to defend slavery. Despite these disadvantages it is important to note that the South fought a long and bitter war with an unexpected degree of military success.

That military success in the Civil War was undoubtedly due to a strong sense of cultural and political unity, supported by a self-image which permitted the Southerner (or at least those at the top of the political and financial hierarchy) to regard himself as equal to 4 or 5 Yankees. Now is not the place to examine in detail the South's self-image; Wilbur J Cash has more than adequately done so in his book The Mind of the South. There he draws some interesting conclusions which are very relevant to my theme, not least his view that the slave-based economy of the large plantation had an inevitable inward turning effect. Plantation owners, the aristocracy of the South, inevitably looked to their own local situation where they were masters of both man and land. "More and more, as time went on", Cash says, "he (the planter) would come to front the world from his borders

like a Gael chieftain from his rock-ringed glen, wholly content with his autonomy and jealously guardful that nothing should encroach upon it." One does not have to look very far from this picture of the South, particularly in the context of the conflict with the Union States, to see echoes of the decaying feudal order that Scott presents in Waverley and the Saxon-Norman conflict of Ivanhoe.

Waverley demonstrates all too clearly that the old clan structure, even if it has such high-hearted leaders as Fergus MacIvor and Evan Dhu Maccombich, is doomed when it comes into conflict with what Scott saw as a civilized society, because it is organisationally weak and riven by factional dispute. Edgar Johnson's conclusion in The Great Unknown that "The Highland Chiefs are self-deceived with the belief that in the event of failure they can safely retreat into their trackless glens" is an illuminating parallel with the Southern aristocrat.

The antithesis between what Scott might define in his own terms as a "civilized" society and a feudal one is less clearly delineated in Ivanhoe, not least because the novel itself is set in the feudal era. The principles expounded here are much more those of what is expected of a true and honourable feudal leader and it is possible to see parallels between what is expected of a feudal aristocrat and the idealised picture of responsibilities that the Southern planter saw himself as having to his slave labour force. The South, finding itself at a moral disadvantage,

needed to find a moral justification for slavery. The idealised picture, created by Scott, of a world in which feudal, patriarchal, or benevolently despotic figures can be seen caring for people to whom they are lord may well have offered a very attractive image to the South.

Ivanhoe himself is not free from criticism throughout the novel, and this is something which I shall return to, but he berates Richard for the lack of care he offers his subjects:

"Your Kingdom is threatened with disillusion and civil war - your subjects menaced with every species of evil ..... why, oh why, noble Prince, will you thus vex the heart of your faithful servants, and expose your life by lonely journeys and rash adventures, as if it were of no more value than that of a mere knight-errant, who has no interest on earth but what lance and sword may procure him?"

Richard has forsaken his pre-destined role to pursue individual glory which means that he is unable to look to his own responsibilities. Comparing this position with that of the Clan chieftains in Waverley it is possible to discern a middle way where the individual is aware of his own responsibilities to the community to which he belongs, but also is not blind to where that community fits into the overall pattern of the world.

It is the eponymous hero of Waverley who, through the

testing of his strengths and weaknesses, finds that important middle way. The flaw at the heart of the Old South was that it never found the middle way and, like Richard, pursued its own individual glory, whilst like the Clan chieftains, failing to see the changes in social organisation going on around it.

One assumption which ought to be tested is whether Scott was any more popular in the South than the North. Genovese concludes that "he appears to have been no less popular in the North". A moment's reflection is sufficient to see why this might, indeed, be the case. Scott was writing for a modern audience through modern eyes and his works were universally popular in the English speaking world. It was the South, rather than he, which developed the themes of his novels into a support argument for slavery.

It is undeniable that, throughout the forty years leading up to the Civil War, the South felt itself under continual and growing threat. The sectional conflict in American politics throughout that period was on the question of whether the new territories being opened up in the West would become slave or free states. The South saw every attempt to contain the spread of slavery as a direct threat to its existence and a further indication of the North's determination to dominate it both politically and economically. One can see in this context the appeal of Scott's early poetry to the Southern mind. Take, for example, the opening of the Lay of the Last Minstrel:

Why do these steeds stand ready dight,
Why watch these warriors, arm'd, by night? -
They watch, to hear the blood-hound baying:
They watch, to hear the war-horn braying;
To see St George's red cross streaming,
To see the midnight beacon gleaming:
They watch, against Southern force and guile.

Such words must have been redolent to the ears of the South; painting a dramatic and vivid picture of an outnumbered band of knights waiting to meet, not only a stronger force, but also one which would use trickery and cunning to defeat them; who may come, like demons in the might, to destroy them.

Viewed on that level alone the Scottish knights, and what they stand for, are seen as a paradigm for every man's conduct. The heroic code is further developed in the single combat between Musgrave and Deloraine. The single warrior, and his actions, become representative of the values and strengths of the party he represents. Thus, each individual, whether knight or foot-soldier, can be said to epitomise those strengths and to have a personal involvement in, and responsibility for, his party's victory or defeat. It is, perhaps, indicative of the effect of such sentiments on the Old South that the one incident in the Civil War which most fully echoes the heroic feudal age was the charge of Pickett's Brigade at Gettysburg, where 14,000 Confederate infantry charged a significantly superior entrenched

Union Line with grievous losses. Pickett himself is described as "a cross between a Cavalier Dandy and a river boat gambler" who "affected the romantic style of Sir Walter Scott's heroes". That even American historians have difficulty in identifying Scott's particular influence on the South is, I think, evident from the fact that this is the sole reference to him in that pre-eminent modern history of the American Civil War Battle Cry of Freedom by James M Macpherson and that Mcpherson himself does not provide any clear justification for this assertion.

This is the point at which, I think, we should begin to look at how Scott presents the chivalric ideal in his novels, rather than the early poetry, for it is here that we can see that he was not such a reckless adherent to the heroic ideal as those who would champion his influence on the South might maintain.

Let us look first at Ivanhoe. We have already seen how the heroic ideal is perverted in Richard. The novel also debates the nature of chivalry. Ivanhoe proclaims: "The love of battle is food upon which we live - the dust of the melee is the breath of our nostrils! We live not - we wish not to live - longer than while we are victorious and renowned - Such, maiden, are the laws of chivalry to which we are sworn, and to which we offer all that we hold dear."

Rebecca challenges the futility of this and starkly highlights the damage which it causes to the fabric of society.

She sees the chivalric ideal as no more than "a demon of vain glory" and calls upon Ivanhoe to recognise "all the travail and pain you have endured ... all the tears which your deeds have caused". Standing, as she does at the moral heart of the novel, Rebecca is herself only too well aware of the truly destructive nature of the heroic ideal: an ideal which leads to her and her father's ultimate exile from a country which is supposedly ruled by those with high moral ideals.

It is, to my mind, impossible not to conclude that Scott is only giving very limited approval, within the period about which he writes, to the feudal code of honour: the self-same code which the South seems to have so readily adopted. If we take but one parallel, the South was as dismissive of the humanity of its slaves as the Norman conquerors were of their Jewish subjects.

The Southerner would, undoubtedly, answer the charge of dismissing the humanity of slaves by saying that he had done no more than adopt the high chivalric ideals of Ivanhoe, Waverley or Roderick Dhu. Let us, therefore, establish something of a dialogue between the Southerner trying to identify the mark of Scott's works on the cast of mind of his forebears and the sceptic, for as such I must classify myself for the moment.

Let our Southerner first look to Waverley and its eponymous hero. He notes how Flora MacIvor recognises and pays tribute to Waverley's bravery, his sensitivity and his sense of honour. It

is for these very reasons that she refuses to marry him without love. Our Southerner then turns to the battle of Preston-pans, where Waverley charges at the head of his regiment of Highlanders, seemingly heedless of the danger. The Southerner cannot but here draw a parallel with Pickett's charge at Gettysburg.

Let me now, in my unaccustomed role as sceptic, look rather more deeply at Waverley's psychology and motivation. Scott sees his hero's weaknesses alongside his heroic virtues and it is the interplay between them which gives the novel its psychological structure and strength, just as it is the struggle between a dying way of life and a vigorous "civilization" which gives it its historical background. Waverley, at the opening of the novel, is no classical hero; indeed, he is more nearly the prodigal son, with his inability to proceed "in habits of firm and assiduous application". Similarly, his leading of the charge at Preston-pans is not the action of a valiant adherent to the cause, but the reaction of a man who, on hearing the voice of his former colonel, "wished to awake from what seemed at the moment a dream, strange, horrible, and unnatural". Waverley, therefore, leads the charge with the aim of saving life and ultimately rescues Colonel Talbot.

When Waverley ultimately attains what the Southerner might regard as truly heroic status it is all too late. After the trial for treason of the Highlanders, Waverley seems determined

to assert his own heroism in an ultimately futile gesture. As Fergus bids him farewell Waverley exclaims; "we part not here!" Fergus recognises the emptiness of such a gesture and, in his speech of farewell attains an heroic stature, which his support of what both author and the reader have known to be a doomed cause from the outset has hitherto denied him:

"Oh yes, we do; you must come no further. Not that I fear what is to follow for myself: Nature has her tortures as well as art; and how happy we should think the man who escapes from the throes of a mortal and painful disorder, in the space of a short half hour? And this matter, spin it out as they will, cannot last longer. But what a dying man can suffer firmly, may kill a living friend to look upon."

If there is any heroic ideal in Scott's work, I think it must be here. Fergus makes his coming execution and the failure of his cause seem as nothing compared to the grief he would feel for his friend, were he to witness his death. This is a sense of honour which the Southern gentlemen would undoubtedly recognise.

This seems to be the ideal point to return to the proposition with which I opened this evening; that the South was defeated in the Civil War because of its devotion to Scott. I think, my opening historical comparison between the strengths and weaknesses of North and South clearly and easily illustrated the

over-simplification of that assertion. Conflict in whatever form it exists is inevitably complex in both its causes and outcomes and it would be dangerous to attribute any conflict to a literary root.

When, however, I began to consider this issue I was minded to deliver a verdict of "not proven". My reasoning here was that, as I hope I have shown, it is possible to abstract political, social and historical elements from Scott's works which to the Southern mind of today, or that of 150 years ago, would seem redolent of the Old South's situation. However, I must question whether that verdict really can be sustained. First, Scott's mind-image of the past can be no more than that. No novelist or poet can truly put himself inside the mind of a character from another age and accurately reflect his thoughts and values. Secondly, the South's image of itself is as unreal as a novelist's image of his characters. The majority of Southerners were not patrician gentlemen descended from the old colonial aristocracy of Virginia, but yeoman farmers or small plantation holders. In either case they championed and survived as the result of a degrading system of bondage which was morally indefensible. Thirdly, Scott never gives the chivalric, or gentlemanly, ideal of honour whole-hearted approval. His works are psychologically more realistic than the label "romantic" might suggest. It is the inner and outer moral struggle of his characters which is the prime matter of his work, not the ideals for which they ostensibly stand. Fourthly, and perhaps slightly

lightheartedly, as I said earlier, there is no evidence to suggest that Scott was any less popular in the Union states than in the South.

I am now, therefore, firmly of the view that a verdict of "not guilty" must be delivered.

If confirmation of my conclusion is needed may be it can be taken from the words with which Foote concludes his work, referring to words which Lincoln had used in response to a Whitehouse serenade on the occasion of his re-election, Foote says "Davis could never match that music, or perhaps even catch its tone. His was a different style, though it too had its beauty and its uses: as in his response to a recent Beauvoir visitor, a reporter who hoped to leave with something that would help explain to readers the underlying motivation of those crucial years of bloodshed and division. Davis pondered briefly, then replied, 'tell them - he paused as if to sort the words - tell the world that I only loved America'.

I would like to acknowledge the tremendous help I received from John Tanner of the Lord Chancellor's Department in the preparation of this address. Any defects in it are entirely my own.

AIR MAIL

Eric P. Newman
6450 Cecil Ave.
St. Louis, Mo. 63105

November 3, 1994

Honorable James McKay
Lord Chancellor's Residence
House of Lords
London 3W1A OPW ENGLAND

Dear James:

Your recent visit with us was a delight and your presentation a great success. We sincerely enjoyed getting to know Bet better.

Before you came to America, I was privileged to read your presentation as president of the Sir Walter Scott Society and your feeling that he probably did not cause our Civil War. I already knew who did start it as President Abraham Lincoln (well over six feet in height) looked down on Harriet Beecher Stowe (four and one-half feet in height) and said "So you are the little woman who started the Civil War." She, as you know, had written **Uncle Tom's Cabin** about 1850 and stirred up the anti-slavery thinking here just as religious groups in Britain had done earlier to reform the British colonies.

I mentioned that I had another curious connection between America and Sir Walter Scott. In your presentation you mentioned Rebecca in **Ivanhoe.** She was actually an American. Rebecca Gratz (1781-1869) was beautiful, charming, brilliant, energetic and kind, and was raised in a successful and prominent Jewish family in Philadelphia. She fell in love with Samuel Ewing, the son of a clergyman. They did not marry because of religious differences. Rebecca Gratz was a devoted friend of Matilda Hoffman of New York and their families often exchanged visits. Washington Irving (1783-1859) was engaged to marry Matilda Hoffman and knew Rebecca Gratz by virtue of her visits to the Hoffman house and knew Rebecca's sad predicament. Then tragically Matilda Hoffman died suddenly. Neither Rebecca Gratz nor Washington Irving were ever married to anyone but remained lifelong friends. When Washington Irving first visited Britain as an outstanding American writer, he spent time with Walter Scott and they became friends. Washington Irving told Scott the story of Rebecca Gratz and Rebecca in **Ivanhoe** resulted. This matter has been known for a long time but perhaps you might not have run across it. Scott knew how to use that situation to perfection. Perhaps you could use that curious incident somehow.

Bernice is now in her new house and has sold her larger one. Evelyn joins me in sending our best to both of you.

Sincerely,

Eric P. Newman

EPN:bv

10 May 1997

Evelyn and Eric Newman
6450 Cecil Ave., Saint Louis, Missouri 63105-2225

Lord & Lady Mackay:

Dear James & Betty:

Evelyn and I hope that you enjoy your reentry into a normal civilian life from the backscratching and back-biting of the political stratosphere. When you can retire from public service with grace and dignity plus the obvious respect you both engendered you have accomplished something admirable. Those of us who deliberately avoid political involvement appriciate those who take such risks. The UK and the US are very different in the way these matters are handled but the people's wishes are very much the same. The need to protect one's self from the press, the political opposition and the lunatic fringe consumes so much energy that could be devoted to making worthwhile accomplishments and enjoying the wonders of life.

We hope you can increase the close encounters with your family and we know you will relish that. One of our grandsons who works in Tokyo is being married this August to a South African lady lawyer who used her ability to speak Afrikaans to work in Indonesia for a Japanese firm because Dutch is widely spoken in Indonesia. They are both going back to Harvard for advanced degrees.

We have another grandson at M.I.T. getting his doctorate in philosophy after enjoying his two years at Oxford to earn his master's degree. A granddaughter is in the U.S. Peace Corp in Paraguay and loves to teach the Indian native farmers beekeeping,

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Evelyn and Eric Newman
6450 Cecil Ave., Saint Louis, Missouri 63105-2225

cotton farming and aerobic dancing.
de gustibus.

Evelyn and I continue to work full time every day on cultural projects and hope you will have contentment in all the new things you do.

We invite you to come back to St Louis to our home and to see us and the Mississippi River. If there is anything we can do for you in America we stand ready.

Our love to you both

Shrine

THE LORD CHANCELLOR'S RESIDENCE
HOUSE OF LORDS,
LONDON SW1A 0PW

071-219 6685

Dear Evelyn and Eric,

Thank you Eric for your most interesting letter. I will certainly find an opportunity to use your story.

We both enjoyed immensely our visit to St. Louis and the marvellous hospitality you extended to us in your fascinating home.

We hope that Bernice is fully settled in her new home. With our very best wishes to you both,

Yours ever,
James.